

Financial	
Q	A
Can we emphasize that the \$15,000 is optional and so Sea Grant programs will most likely receive \$66,500. This was a point of confusion with our current fellows.	leg fellows will not receive this additional 15K, and you may or may not receive the additional 15K as executive fellows. It is optional and depends on the agency.
If your host office invites you to travel does it come out of that \$15,000 or do they provide extra \$\$ on top of that?	Executive: There are two scenarios for a host office to support travel. (1) they will add UP TO 15K on to the award for you to use for host office related travel. (2) The host office will go through a process called invitational travel, which means they will pay for travel directly. Legislative: If you are invited to travel for your office, you will either (1) pay out of your discretionary budget or (2) the group inviting you on the trip (ie. and executive office) will provide invitational travel.
If we do not spend all of the Discretionary budget to we keep the difference?	No, it is a University award that will get returned to Host office or NOAA
When it says academic tuition, does this include student loans?	No, you can't use the award to directly pay for loans. Loans would be paid for out of your stipend. Some federal student loans may be eligible for deferment during the fellowship.
How does the discretionary budget work if we have defended and graduated from uni before the fellowship starts?	Status as a student should not impact the amount of the discretionary budget.
Per semester, we typically pay a cumulative amount with Tuition and Fees (also covers Health Insurance, transit card, etc).... so our sea grant will only pay for the 'tuition' component and not the others from the 5k fund?	
Can discretionary funds be used to cover University fees?	Yes, but check with your Sea Grant program.
Are we no longer allowed to pay for health insurance with the discretionary funds?	Yes this is correct, ACA requires you to have health insurance by law, however the fellowship does not mandate it. It will now come out of your salary of stipend
For option 1, does that mean you'd have University provided medicare and SS contributions? So you wouldn't be paying the entire self-employment tax rate you'd be paying for option 3?	Yes. We are unsure/cannot comment on the need for payment of self-employment tax rate.
So, for example, for option #1 would your paycheck be "lower" than others because you already have healthcare and taxes taken out?	Yes.

Maybe I missed something as I was audio only for the first 30 mins, but I'm a little confused about the stipend. I was hearing that the total award was 84,000, but the stipend amount is ~61 and is expected to cover health care. Then there is the additionally 5,000 in discretionary funds. What happens to the additional 18,000? Did I mishear you?	The remaining 15K is a placeholder for host office travel.
Do discretionary funds typically cover things like conferences (not training/classes per say but related to work)?	Yes, they can cover conferences.
Is there any possibility to receive stipend in advance of February?	Unfortunately, we can not start the award early.
Hi! This may be a question for our state office, but do you think we could use our discretionary budget for a metro card/metro travel?	typically no

Questions to ask your State Sea Grant Program

Q	A
Will we have to negotiate with our Sea Grant office for what we spend our discretionary funds on?	You will have to get approval to spend money, so you can talk to your specific state program about how you justify your costs.
Is the stipend/salary a monthly payment? Bi-weekly? Up front?	This you will have to ask your specific state SG
Are there standards for moving expenses or is that flexible based on personal situations? Will that require receipts?	dependent on your SG program. But most likely some flexibility exists
Should we explicitly be removed off our graduate programs payroll? There is a possibility that I may have overlap with grad school and the fellowship	Not necessarily, but there are some rules about multiple federal funding sources - please reach back out to us and your SG to clarify
Do I provide justification for any travel/training to my state seagrant program or through the host office?	Yes, you will need to have a conversation/justification to both - this can typically be via email
What if we have graduated? Is it still administered by the University we applied from?	most likely, yes.

General Questions

Q	A
When do people typically/when would you recommend folks contact their sea grant offices? Like now or closer to placement week?	We recommend sooner rather than later to make the connection - nothing like the present

how many percent of the current fellows actually moved to the DMV area?	roughly 60% - this class is pretty active in a safe way. Getting together in outdoor spaces mostly
Are there rules/conflicts around independent contracting work during the fellowship if they are not tied to federal funds?	Not typically, but check with NSGO first
Are there any consolidated places for former fellows that may be leaving DC to post their housing availabilities?	Not specifically, but you can use apartments.com, craigslist or resources like that
Any (broad) recommendations for any DC neighborhoods to consider living in?	wait to know where placement is DC/VA?SS area is large - Silver spring is great, Mt. Pleasant, Capital Hill, 16th street.
What is invitational travel? (Sorry)	This is when we pay for your travel as in NSGO invites you to travel and is a federal process
Will we have to get a health care plan that For those living in DC/MD what is the most common health care provider these fellows usually get?	typically, use the health exchange (blue cross blue shield/Kaiser are very common)
Is it common for fellows to receive spousal health insurance from their host program?	Depends. If your university is supplying healthcare then they should be able to clarify. If you are in the bundle that needs to find HC outside of the award and pay for it through your stipend, you can choose whatever HC best matches your needs.
Are we allowed to talk to current fellows about how their taxes/pay work?	Absolutely, they are also not legally allowed to give you tax advice. Our best recommendation is finding a tax specialists to answer your questions
The stipend is much higher this year in part to help cover health insurance, correct?	yes
In the leg branch the interview weeks are just a couple weeks before our start date. I realize it is probably different this year since it is virtual, but do you have advice on whether to plan moving before or after the interview period?	We Recommend moving the three day weekend before placement week. Most offices will expect you to be in the office around the start of the fellowship.
Did you know of anyone that tried a Baltimore to DC commute?	Yes, if you leave early enough you can get there without too much trouble (i.e., before 5:30am) Find a podcast... :)
When you say it depends on our university, does that mean our sea grant program should connect with our university/department?	Yes, your state Sea Grant Program which is associated with a University
If we're still going to be enrolled in courses at our university, is tuition reimbursement covered?	Yes, this can be covered by the award
Can Sea Grant program contacts receive a copy of the host office descriptions prior to placement week?	I will do my best to remember!

Any idea when award documents will be sent to the programs?	Legislative awards will be administered in october, executive awards will be adminstered starting in november and may be as late as febraurary or March
Professional Development:	
Can they pay for a conference if you are not presenting, like if you want to just attend?	YES!
Also, do you know why the leg cohort doesn't get the travel related budget? Just because we won't be traveling?	1) you will travel, it will typically come out of discretionary funds and 2) NSGO pays for all leg fellows and there is a limited budget here - we have never had a leg fellow run out of money (within last 5 years) It is common for fellows to have enough resources to do what they want
The Fellowship:	
What about conferences that are outside the scope or field that your knauss position is in? I.e. unrelated to your work focus	It will depend, if you can justify why this topic is critical for your development, and your program and host agreee
Are host offices typically accomodating to travel to conferences that would require you to be out of the office?	Yes, talk walk potential hosts and gauge as they are all a bit different
However is there any chance that any of the leg positions will be virtual?	Most likely no. Many of our current hosts are in a hybrid format. The situation is dynamic and always changing!
Hi! Would getting more adanced certifications, lets say scuba diving certifications (technical/ American Academy of Underwater Sciences AAUS), count as professional development?	Potentially, you would need to work directly with your Sea Grant Program.
General Placement Week	
Q	A
Sorry- one more interview question. How long will each interview slot be?	30 minutes, no longer
Will the host presentations be live such that we could ask the hosts questions on that first day?	Yes, they will be live (and also rccorded)
If you don't get a call-back invitation, does that mean you are out of the running for that position?	No, not recieving a call back does not put you out of the running!
After placement week, how will we know if we got the position?	everyone will get placed - you will rank hosts, hosts will rank fellows and then we run all the info through a program and annonouce your placement at the end of the week
will the placement week happy hours be virtual this year?	Yes, all placement-related events will be virtual this year

are the fellow presentations live or are we just recording it in house but not live? if that makes sense	Not live, pre-recorded
Are there any cohort "get to know you" type events?	Yes!
Will legislative office videos be released similarly in October or prior to interviews in Jan?	No, leg videos will be released prior to leg placement week, prior to interviews in January
Do we have to interview with every office?	Executive fellows do not. 17-20 interviews is typical
Will Happy Hour be during the same week as interviews? Is happy hour just a more casual conversation?	"happy hours" are a chance to informally and casually ask follow up questions after your interviews. This will take place at the end of day
How do you make the final placement decision? For example, do you use an algorithm?	yes, we do!
When will we know the host offices for this year? Sorry I know it's not finance related!	The week before placement week (early october for exec. And early January for leg)
I know some fellows will spend part of their time working on their dissertation. Is it possible for some fellows to spend their time working on non-dissertation related projects as well? i.e. ongoing research/applied projects.	This will be an office specific related question - talk with potential hosts
Do we get to pick which executive positions we want to interview for?	Yes, you will design your own interview schedule
What is happening on January 11-12 for leg fellows? Is that part of placement week?	yes this is part of placement week - host presentations will be a part of the first two days
Will placement week be flexible enough that I can accomodate pre-existing appointments (e.g. a 2 hour health-related appointment)?	Yes and no. some parts will be reccorded, however there are some parts where you will need to be there
Are the host presentations going to be available to access outside the allocated times on the schedule?	Yes, they will be recorded however you need to watch all videos before interview sign ups
Since legislative is already a small amount of positions, are we interviewing we every position during placement week?	You will likely interview with most - 15-17 interviews is typical
Are the positions advertised at the beginning of placement week?	all hosts will give a presentation on their office/position in the first day/days of placement weeks
When will we see the fellow/host office get to know you videos?	You will not see other fellows videos, but will see host videos during placement week
Is it 16-18 interviews and then additionally the call backs? Or does the 16-18 include the call backs?	17-20 interviews depending on leg/exec and then 3-5 call backs
What is the safe space on the schedule?	A place (virtual) to check in, decompress, Maddie or Amanda will be there to talk

COVID--We have many of the same questions you do! This situation is fluid and always changing. We will do our best to keep you informed!	
Any updates on how the covid situation is influencing anticipated return-to work schedules vs. remote working?	Some office are already back working full or hybrid in person scheduals. Many offices are expecting a return to work in October, however this may change.
What about the chance for Executive Fellow placements? (RE: in-person vs. virtual)	As of Agust, the majority of our fellows on the exec side are still working remotly.
Are there executive branch positions that are typically virtual/remote, or was that something exclusive to the previous year?	The virtual/remote nature of the fellowship is specific to covid. According to the NOFO you are expected to have the ability to move to the DMV region.
When is the timeline for when we will know our placement? If our host office is beginning virtually, should we wait to move to DC?	Executive--October; Legislative--Janurary.
If there is continued uncertainty with covid - is there going to be flexibility in terms of "in-person" start dates in DC?	Yes and no. Leg side - higher chance of an office wanting you to be in person Feb 1. Some exec offices are in person currently, few hybrid however most right now are virtual - exec hosts in general will be flexible in terms of start dates - ask in interviews